

## Medfield Native Learns About Russia Firsthand



Medfield High grad Nick Farmer stands in front of the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg. (Photos courtesy of Nick Farmer)

BY JOSH PERRY

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Nick Farmer, a 2011 graduate of Medfield High and junior at Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pa., spent his fall semester studying abroad in Russia. Farmer, who is a member of the lacrosse team at Muhlenberg, is studying international politics with a concentration on Russia and jumped at the opportunity to study abroad at Saint Petersburg State University.

“I’m reading all these academic journals and studying the language a little bit back home and that can only do so much,” explained Farmer, who is now settled at Muhlenberg and getting ready for the next semester. “So, I figured if I was going to be serious about this that I’d want to get some more hands-on experience and understand the culture. Only then could I really piece together the nature of their politics.”

The Muhlenberg lacrosse program has sent a number of its players to study opportunities overseas in recent years and Farmer admitted that it was one of the many things that drew him to the school. “The coach was very open about wanting kids to study abroad. I knew that was something that I was going to have to do, if I was going to study international relations and that essentially got the ball rolling a little bit more,” said Farmer.

There was, of course, a culture shock upon landing in Russia and Farmer, who blogged about his trip for the Muhlenberg website, noted some of the biggest differences that he saw in St. Petersburg. But, in the end, his biggest shock was that the people were really not all that different from home.

He remarked, “The most surprising thing I learned was probably that Russia isn’t that different than the United States and that all the stereotypes that say different - yeah some of them rang true – but by the end of my tenure I was looking back on it and...they’re really not that different from us.”

Farmer continued, “I made a lot of Russian friends over there and they’ll invite you back into their apartments and they’ll give you everything - going above and beyond what I think most Americans would do and it was for a complete foreigner.”

With his junior season just around the corner, lacrosse was still part of the trip, although there was not much of a lacrosse culture to be found in Russia. Farmer mentioned that he did manage to find some pick-up games with some of the other 100 students that were part of the study abroad program and even got a chance to play a team from Moscow.

He added, “There’s really only two clubs in the country, as far as I know. My coach wanted me to at least touch a stick while I was over there. So, I met up at a field with some Russians and some graduate students and we probably had three or four practices together and then we had a game up in Moscow with the Moscow team. It was kind of by luck.”

As he looks forward to his junior season, Farmer reflected on his trip and the importance of taking opportunities to explore the world.

“I think it’s really important to go off and see the world because by the time students my age and younger enter the workforce, it’s going to be very internationally-focused,” he asserted. “You can read about things but you can’t fully grasp another culture until you immerse yourself in it.”  
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